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Beginners' Spanish. By WILLIAM HANNSLER and CLARENCE E. PARMENTER. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1919. xxv+294 pp.

One finds in this book much that is old and considerable that is new. Our old friend, the *Puerta del Sol*, shows up as is usual in any well bred Spanish text book. The time honored school-room adventures with chalk, eraser and pointer are set forth in meticulous Spanish. A series of letters adorn the text. They do not remind one of Mme de Sévigné. The *cuerpo humano*, the *cinco sentidos*, the *cuatro estaciones* and the *reloj* do yeoman service. Luisa raises her arm, Enrique opens the door, Tomás places the red ink beside the thick book, while Pedro obligingly refrains from conversation with Adela—all as bidden in impeccable Castilian. The atmosphere is peninsular and pedagogic.

In the preface the authors offer some refreshingly rational observations on the absurdity of using technical Spanish grammatical terms in teaching Spanish grammar to American youth. Unfortunately the point is somewhat blunted by the presence of directions like the following, page 7, second lesson: *Antepóngase a cada uno de los sustantivos siguientes el artículo definido singular e indíquese con . . .* etc.

The best feature of the book is the part that treats of the formation of sounds and the phonetic symbols. How much use of such symbols should be made in class room blackboard work may be debatable, but in the main the authors' contentions are indisputable. Stress groups, breath groups, linkings and intonation are commendably handled, perhaps too briefly.

Occupying middle ground between the old grammatical method (where the author formulated the rules and gave just enough examples to raise the presumption that he was telling the truth) and the early pitchfork style of the direct method (where the tenses, moods, pronouns and genders were jumbled together with the expectation that the student somehow might imbibe correct grammatical principles, through the pores, as it were), Messrs Hannsler and Parmenter have laid due and scientific emphasis on eye and ear training, on close observation, on accurate reasoning, on careful inference and on classification by the student himself.

Interesting from the start, sane and conservative, yet abreast of the best modern thought and practice, the book will do much to redeem modern language teaching from the stigma cast on it too often and perhaps sometimes too justly by scientists and classical teachers.

E. L. C. MORSE

Sobre el Estudio de Idiomas; carta al Señor don Julio Saavedra Molina. Por Rodolfo Lenz. Santiago, Chile, 1919. 127pp.

In this excellent pamphlet Lenz, the well-known Chilean scholar, discusses the Modern Language problem with reference to the

needs of his adopted country. In reality a review of his pupil Saavedra's *Enseñanza cultural de idiomas extranjeros*, the treatise abounds in interesting observations and side-lights culled from a long and fruitful career as professor of English, French and German at the Instituto pedagógico of Santiago. The Chilean and American problems are so far identical in that, according to Lenz, the foreign languages should be studied primarily for the enrichment of our national culture and not because of any commercial advantages to be derived from such study. These, in either case, are secondary.

On this essential point Saavedra and Lenz are agreed. They differ, however, on the method to be employed. For Saavedra it seems sufficient if the pupil be taught to translate the foreign idiom into the mother tongue, for by this short-cut he will get the ideas of the foreign language without wasting time on unessentials. It is in contesting this fallacy that Lenz's thoughtful and able discussion is particularly to be recommended. For, as Lenz at once points out, a translation is only a translation when it is an exact and idiomatic equivalent, and such an equivalent is only possible if the translator knows how to render a foreign idiom by a native idiom, in other words, if he has a fairly thorough and objective knowledge of both languages; and even then, it may still be impossible for the simple reason that nations using different languages do not think the same thoughts and hence an equivalent may not exist. A good example is the German *Bewusstsein* and *Gewissen*, two distinct ideas, the one physical and the other moral, which Spanish renders by the one word *conciencia*; and many similar examples will occur to any language teacher. In fact, as Lenz axiomatically concludes, a translation from one language to another is possible only when both languages are on the same cultural level. Hence the truth of the Italian proverb: *traduttore traditore*; and Lenz might have adduced the testimony of Du Bellay, Rivarol and a host of other non-pedagogical writers to the same effect.

But, granting that the Chilean—as well as the American—studies foreign languages mainly with the object of being able to 'read' them, what method is the teacher to employ? Obviously, the answer is the Direct Method, provided always language-study is begun at an early age and consecutively pursued over a long period of years. And in cases where the subject cannot be begun until the pupils have reached a fairly mature age some form of the old grammar method seems to Lenz to be on the whole the best. This side of the matter we need not discuss here: suffice it to say that Lenz records fully his own interesting experience, and that Chile was one of the first countries to use the Direct Method, and with unusually fruitful results to judge by the Chileans who have recently visited the United States.

Several points, however, in Lenz's discussion might be noted here as useful to our American teachers. One of these is the mistake of thinking that the Direct Method makes conversation its only or chief aim.

De ninguna manera, says Lenz, p. 63. El objeto es iniciar al alumno en el manejo práctico del idioma, comunicarle lo mas esencial del diccionario i de la gramática (aunque sea inconscientemente), en fin, colocarlo, respecto al idioma extranjero, en una situacion aproximadamente parecida a la que tiene en su lengua patria al ingresar a la escuela.

Unless our teachers bear this fact in mind they will forget that the coping-stone of the Direct Method has always been the study of literature, read not in translation but in the original, as nearly as possible as the foreigner himself would read it. Another excellent observation of Lenz's is that the study of grammar (p. 51) should not be considered in the same light as the study of an exact science. Sciences are 'absolute,' in the sense that a scientific problem requires an answer of 'yes' or 'no'; whereas a grammatical problem is a human question and therefore relative. So that it is essential that the educative, cultural side should not be lost sight of in the study of grammar. It is natural that Lenz, a pupil of Passy's, should express himself on the value of Phonetics; but again he shows his discrimination in emphasizing the necessity of phonetic study in connection especially with the acquisition of English and French, languages in which the spelling is such a poor index of the pronunciation. As to matters of pedagogical detail, the teacher will find especially interesting the *método de lectura*, outlined on pp. 77 ff.; also the remarks on written work: *las tareas escritas*, p. 79. Finally, Lenz's concept of our civilization as necessarily continuing that of Greece and Rome is a sign of the times. The language-problem is ultimately one, not several, and the nation that neglects its cultural origins does so at its own peril. This is as true of the United States as it is of Chile.

Some readers may regret that the personal angle looms so large in Lenz's argument. It is true, he does see his own experience in rather roseate coloring. At the same time, making allowance for the subjective element which pedagogical discussions seem never able to escape, it can be truthfully said that the present pamphlet is not only an interesting but an extremely valuable addition to the really fruitful discussions of why and how modern foreign languages should be taught.

W. A. N.